



HOWARD MEHRING

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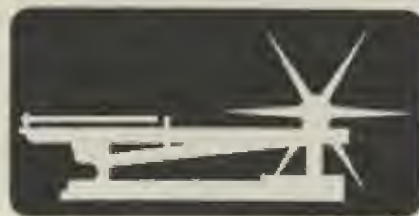
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## TIME: A PANEL DISCUSSION\*

*Edited by LUCY R. LIPPARD*

One of a series, "Issues in Art"; held at the New York Shakespeare Festival Theatre, March 17, 1969.—Moderator: Seth Siegelaub; panelists: Carl Andre, Michael Cain, Douglas Huebler, Ian Wilson.

*S. S.:* I'd like to preface the discussion with some random thoughts about time, one of which is that at this point in time, it isn't much of an issue in art. Time is an element in looking at and evaluating art, just as it is in judging or looking at life. But there are certain questions regarding time that are special to perceiving art works: First, the time it takes to see a work of art. For instance, a painting which is 40 feet long is perceived in a particular way, to say nothing of the activity within that forty-foot span. Second, the time that's implicit in a work of art; it took a long time to make; it was built up. Thirdly, from the audience's point of view, how the passage of time affects the viewing of art, making a static object a residue art object. An object has its making time, and its looking time, and its changes as time passes.

You can also break down the involvement of art into two very specific areas—space and time. Art as we know it at the moment deals primarily with space and its ramifications—line, composition—formal considerations in a painting or a sculpture. But the question of time is obviously much more elusive, perhaps because there are so few artists who have zeroed in on the issue. Certain artists are now beginning to think more about time and not take it for granted, the way we do in our regular life. There are works of art which exist for a definite limited time, and things not intended to remain forever, just to name two of the possibilities. I want to ask each of the members of the panel what their feelings are about time in regard to their work. I'll start with Carl, if he has a minute.

*C. A.:* I think that it's time that artists got together to recognize their social power and social worth. I urge you all to consider joining together with a group of concerned artists called the Art Workers' Coalition that has already started to act so they can influence their own destinies rather than be subject to the cultural institutions of our society. Every artist moans about the way he's treated, and if we moan together maybe some of the noise will be heard. That's the time I feel most strongly right now.

*D. H.:* I don't know how to follow that. But I'm going to discuss time as it interests me only in terms of art, how it can be used as an art element in any significant way. I don't know if I've found an answer to that, but one way I might describe it would be to create a parallel between Cubist painting and its use of time to fragment and reconstruct objects. My own interest is in taking time as the focus and using the objects to create the sense of time in whatever way this does occur; there are a whole series of ways in which I've worked with that. My concern is time in space and its duration beyond the moment, its duration elsewhere, its duration simultaneously with other things.

*I. W.:* It's possible to think of a work of art as composed of two elements: one, a subject, and two, a medium. About a year ago, I became interested in the idea of using oral communication as a medium. Two or three months later I began to use the word "time", the sound "time", as a subject to be presented through the medium of oral communication. I should mention, however, that in my recent work, of the past six months, I have stopped using time, the idea of time, the sound "time", as a subject so that I can concentrate my effort on the idea of oral communication, used as both a subject and medium. I did consider printing the word "time", but discarded this on the grounds that the physical image and the two-dimensional limitations of such a medium have little in common with the elusive subject of time.

*M. C.:* I am here as a representative of a group of artists who work together collaboratively. And since I guess no one here is familiar with the work of the Pulsa group, I'll describe it for just a moment. We're involved in considering the use of time and actually manipulating time as a material in works of art. Our group, consisting of ten members, is involved in research with programming environments through electronic technology. The environments we work with are varied: interior spaces, public places outdoors, country landscapes. In each case, a particular system capable of emanating (and whenever possible, totally controlling, or at least giving forth) perceptible energies, wave energies—light and sound—is set up and controlled through an electronic system that we've designed. All of our work is, therefore, time-

extended. Generally our environments run from a period of four to ten hours, uninterruptedly, each evening, for a period of a couple of weeks to several months. They're usually programmed so that they're different each night. The large membership of the group is involved in implementing these works, which are very large in scale and, technologically, extremely complex.

Our interest in time is, of course, manifold. In any situation, in any cultural situation, in any society, time (which I think is itself a phenomenon lacking any kind of absolute definition, especially in terms of Einsteinian relativity), time itself has no absolute rate of flow, nor do events have any absolute succession. Instead, the rate of flow and the succession of events is determined by the position of the observer, the speed at which he's moving, gravitational fields, temperature conditions, etc. All this is quite familiar, but it implies that a given culture has to set up some kind of a framework in which people can relate to time. An individual has the same problem. His experience of time consists of nothing more than a succession of events and consciousnesses which he has to order in some way from which he projects principles or discerns certain rates of flow. The fact that an individual isolated in a sensory deprivation chamber experiences a complete disorientation of time is indicative of the fact that we depend upon a flow of events to keep us tuned in to our society's peculiar involvement with temporal structure. Our environment is totally dominated by electronic phenomena. Our total environment, at least at night, is electric. The rate at which actions occur within it, the nature of our experiences in life occur in particular rates and successions determined by electronic technology.

In such an environment, it seems critical to the Pulsa group that a public art form be developed, to deal with these phenomena to create an abstract, meaningful art force which deals specifically with the experiences people have today, in terms of time and also of space in the world. We've devoted ourselves to developing environments in which there operate phenomena such as multiplexing (operations occurring at rates and speeds surpassing typical phenomena in a totally natural world ecology), or audio-visual non-synchrony (that is, when you're in an enclosure where you can't hear what you can see, or vice versa, or where things are seen and heard at different times or rates), in which there's no lineal flow, no direction, no particular point with any hierarchical value over other points in that environment, and a variety of other related features are integrated into a work of art which can then be responded to very simplistically, on an almost preconscious level. To achieve this, or at least to experiment in this direction, we set up a number of large-scale environments in which light and sound sources contain a multiplicity of varied information. We've considered carefully the relationship of the light and the sound in terms of such things as the rate at which each element can be perceived, their interaction, the possibilities of their complicating each other through having a variety of sources of each type present, and through a set of other techniques. Our intention through all of this is to find a way of rendering people's experience of the environment in which they live more integrated, or at least more richly intelligible.

Unfortunately, it's very difficult to describe the kind of effects we've achieved in our environmental work, but there's another kind of time with which we're even more centrally involved. It's the kind of time which is manifest in a very interesting experiment performed years ago to determine whether or not RNA could contain information about the environment. The animal in question was some mollusc, I don't remember which one, but a response to the tidal flow was part of its inherent behaviour; molluscs living in different areas would have different responses, depending on what time the tidal flow occurred. Molluscs from one environment were dissected and RNA was extracted from their cells, and this RNA was then injected into other, similar molluscs. It was found that the information was indeed contained in the RNA.

The interesting thing about this experiment for us is that there are in people, in all kinds of organisms, aside from culturally determined or absolute aspects of time, physiological clocks which involve both successions of events and also rates of generalized flow, which are fixed entities in any given organism at any level of evolution. In the personal history of any individual there are inherent rhythms, an inherent set of information, a basic kind of time which goes on ceaselessly. This kind of information has been exploited very richly in African tribal music, in Indian music, and in other simplistic art forms that deal with very complex rhythm. We regard such rhythmic music as a prototype of a new kind of plastic art. Such music is a specific example of an excellent kind of exploration of a plastic phenomenon. We have attempted to explore rates of information input in relation to experiences in environments. We have worked with a variety of rates of light flashes, generalized changes in illumination, pulses of sound, phase

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changes in these sets of information and other materials, and similar effects, with a special electronic system that we've developed which allows us to tune all of these parameters to our own sensibilities, and to those of our audience, as well as we can understand them.

*C. A.:* First of all, let me say I think that an artist is anyone who says they're an artist. Anything of his product which he says is art, is art. The category of art is not in itself a quality, certainly. It is a human occupation, a very important one. But for myself, just because a society has a certain capacity does not mean that that capacity is of necessity an art form. Our society has this terrible capacity we exercise daily to make war, but we cannot in any way make war an art form.

I would not wish to deprive anybody of the opportunity to use computers, strobe lights, and so forth, but I can't see that the means of art can ever be the value of art. For my own temperament, I like an art which gives me an option to the electronic, computerized, dehumanized, strobe-lighted, nauseating, headache-producing world we're constantly subjected to. My dream is to make an art which approaches timelessness, and I don't mean timelessness as a quality, I mean a place of stillness and serenity where we can regather ourselves, not where we're going to be overloaded again like we're overloaded every day.

*I. W.:* The thing I was driving after in time was animation, and I only achieved that by discarding time and going directly to the source of animation, which is the human being. That is why I use oral communication as an art form. I could say that this whole idea of using a word as a subject came out of Primary Structures, when I realized that a cube can be described and remembered without its physical example present. And from there I went on to the idea of animation, the human source, if you want to put it romantically.

*S. S.:* Carl, is there any formalized relationship that exists in your mind between time and your art?

*C. A.:* I have a David Smith story. I met him for the first time at Bennington in 1964. Of course he was a person I was very much in awe of; I deeply loved his work and everything, but one question bugged me: on some of the stainless steel works, he had a kind of circular wire brushing on the surface which seemed endlessly distracting. It wasn't flat and it wasn't disordered, but you could see the spiralling of the wire brush over the surface. I said, "Mr. Smith, that troubles me deeply, a certain irregularity of your surface." And he said, "Come on, kid, you and I, let's both look at it in five hundred years."

There is one thing my own work doesn't have, and that's an idealized surface, a surface which pretends to be caught in one time and must be perpetually restored and preserved. When I make a piece out of hot-rolled steel, and it's outside, I don't want it to be protected. You know, it's going to last a lot longer than I will or any of you people will, but I don't mind if it rusts. I want what happens to it to be its perpetual existence. I don't want it to be oiled and waxed and shined every day.

*D. H.:* Carl, it seems to me you're saying that you just accept the existence of time and whatever occurs within time.

*C. A.:* I accept what happens to my material.

*D. H.:* Right. There's a McLuhanism you've probably all heard, that now we don't measure how many miles it is to Los Angeles, we measure how long it takes to fly there. The whole sense of time has changed. That seems to me to be something that has changed in the head, but is not experienced as a real sensation. Michael, I'd like to ask you if your group is really trying to restructure the sensation of time. I mean, the sensation of the experience of time by the people who experience your works.

*M. C.:* It's certainly not a preliminary objective in anything that we've done, to literally change the experience of time, because our ends have always been entirely esthetic, on a very plastic level. But what I was saying before about African music, Indian music, the notion that when information is so organized it resonates with physiological information—in that kind of a context there is a transformed sense of time. It's something that everyone has to experience in the context of everything that they do. I would like to say though, that with regard to the conventional concept of time, and the notion of attacking it or providing alternatives, the first kind of time that I tried to talk about, the time that's culturally acceptable, the time that we all share by living in the same society and the same environment, this kind of time is very enclosing. There are available to us all a number of ways of breaking out of this kind of experience. But none of these methods are really environmental, or if they are, they involve some kind of escape from the environment. We're interested in finding a way of putting stillness into the environment's activity. To say that flashes of strobe lights or the generalized qualities of noise that any of our environments may contain is an imposition may to some extent be true, but all

of our environments have been designed to be very open to the public, both in terms of coming in and leaving. A typical one installed in the Boston Public Gardens was incredibly subdued; the lights were under water in a pond, and the sounds were very faint.

In this kind of situation, what we're trying to do is to provide environmental phenomena which are flowing at a different rate than the phenomena that we're accustomed to, so that an alternative time experience opens up. This, I think, constitutes one of the functions of the most radical art forms that can exist in a particular society. And I think you, Carl and Douglas, have been involved in similar innovations; that is, creating works of art which deal with such transformations of the conventional time structure experience in such a way that people get some kind of different perspective on it. We're trying to do something like that in a very physiological way, through the experience of time itself, rather than setting down some particular kind of documentation or description of that occurrence.

*S. S.:* The elusive nature of time is the elusive nature of this panel. We have four people discussing something called time, something we all share, and we get very little agreement on it except that there are 24 hours in a day. Do you people think time could ever be a concrete value as now we feel space is a concrete value? Can you envisage our knowing as much about time in relation to art or to life, as we know about space?

*D. H.:* I don't think we know any more about space than we do about time. At least I don't think I do. We measure space through objects existing in the world, and I think we measure time the same way. They're both rather boundless; they're only conventions that we use. Let me answer the first part of what Seth said too. I think it's perfectly fair to say that time is what each of us says it is at any given moment. But as a convention, it suits our purposes within the terms of the particular structure that we want to give to it. I work in an extremely neutral way. I'm altogether incompetent to work with the kinds of elements and materials that Pulsa does. But I am interested in being able to take some very small piece of life, of the world, and doing something with it in terms of time. I'm interested in denying the sequential, normally accepted role of time, that is by demonstrating how objects or the position of things change. I've done that by having elements, events, or materials actually change as they would normally in sequential time, documenting the changes photographically, and then scrambling the photographs so that there's no priority of the linear. It's just a way of pulling something out of a series of possibilities and calling it a work.

*C. A.:* There are problems here. Of course, I think there is a generally held view of space as a property of matter, so that talking about things outside the universe is ridiculous because you're talking about a place where there is no matter, so there would be no space. And time is related to space in an inseparable way. But I wonder whether in various problems with subatomic physics, a quantum of time might not be discovered, in things like resonance particles, because identity and proximity cannot be distinguished in these things. There may be an irreducible quantum of time in subatomic particles, but I think time as we experience it is just a congeries of rates of many different things.

*M. C.:* With regard to the interrelation of time and space, though our explorations haven't been too extensive to date, we're very interested in a number of ideas. As far as I can discern, in physics, in the units of our experience, time is probably more understood than space. What Doug mentioned about McLuhan also applies to large distances that we pace off on foot or by any means. It's not even a new phenomenon. A certain quantity of distance is known in terms of time. If you look across a long field, and can't decide how long it is, you walk across it.

We're very interested in the fact that space and time become manifest as contrasting entities through the different rates of movement of wave-energy. Auditory information moves much more slowly than light. As a consequence, we have an opportunity to play with both of these phenomena to create particular situations dealing with that time-lag. Another area is the Doppler effect; if a sound is emanating from an object moving towards one, the pitch is altered so that it becomes higher, and the reverse if it's going away. Frequencies of light are also changed comparably, but that's only perceptible in terms of the sound area. That kind of thing is really interesting to us because it's an area where there's nearly a limit of perceptual abilities, and a place where the true nature of wave energies become manifest. In terms of phenomena like these, we're very interested in exploiting situations where some kind of an interaction, or an interchangeability between time and space, can become very literal. The idea, for example, of being in a very large environment which you measure in units of distance between various points; or you deal with the units in terms of a particular



configuration; these points themselves are pulsating, keeping time in some way or another, so that one's whole experience of a physical thing is in fact configured by a time element, which in turn is active within the system.

S. S.: One could think of the making of art works as points in time. One refers to early work and late work and recent work. When an art object is made, it is made at a particular time. In a sense, the mere desire to make it may be a desire to stop time. An artist may make something just so that he can remember it in a world of other things.

*Question from the floor to I. W.:* Don't you think your work exists in the present and in no other place?

I. W.: No, no, absolutely not, because if I say to you that I'm talking about oral communication as being an art form, you can walk out of here and you can walk for the next ten hours and you'll still have the art form; it will still exist, but in your head, not in an oral communication form; it remains a mnemonic form of the idea. And so the idea I'm concerned with is transcending particular times and particular places. I try to preserve an idea by making it mnemonic, so that you can preserve it by remembering it.

(Statement about space-time, energy, and architecture from the floor.)

M. C.: It's true we're interested in architecture, or a new kind of architecture. I could also remark that our involvement is with energy, as well as with space and time. Our work involves finding ways, first of all, of creating and then controlling perceptible energy in particular time-spaces, environments.

C. A.: I think architecture is as noble as, probably nobler than painting and sculpture, and I think music is probably the noblest of all arts. I wonder why Pulsa chose to relate their work to the plastic arts, when it would seem to be more related to music, or performing art.

M. C.: The relationship we see between our work and plastic art lies in the notion of phenomena perceived in a plastic way. The most critical factor in any work of plastic art is not a material entity, but a certain experiential quality built into the work, which can only be achieved in plastic terms and has a plastic effect on the senses—that same quality we find manifestly present on a more abstract level in Indian music, or perhaps more particularly in African music. In talking about plastic art on this level, we're obviously not talking any longer about traditional art forms, but about a new concept which incorporates what we think is the essence of what should be going on in plastic art. Extending that into architecture is not motivated by an interest in architecture *per se* any more than we have an interest in painting or any other field *per se*, but by the notion that an architectural context is the one where our work can be most public and within which it can have the richest interaction with people. What we're doing is very much involved with the computer revolution, the revolution of man-machine relationships. Inasmuch as we're developing environments that are under electronic control or direction and people are experiencing those environments, they're not in any way controlled by them; they're interacting with them. By being monitored, responded to by the control systems, they will be able to develop a much richer and more knowledgeable relationship to all their experiences. Within this context, architecture is an appropriate situation, since it constitutes the principal environment in which we all live, and since it is one of the few places where something can be done now that can last for 20 or 30 years—the time we anticipate as being really meaningful for a programmed environment to develop and interact with people.

S. S.: Ad Reinhardt titled his work timeless paintings, and he used to date them "1960-63", paradoxically presenting an ostensibly timeless painting by dating its period of production. It is conceivable now, whereas it would not have been five or ten years ago, that the issue of time can be somehow more explicitly dealt with. It has been said that the essence of a work of art is germane to its time, could only happen now. This may be a sociological essence, but could conceivably be an art issue now. It's quite obvious that no art object is timeless, at least in the purely physical sense. John Chamberlain's foam sculptures, exposed to ultra violet (laughter) light will eventually pill and wind up as a big mound of dust, which was one of John's intentions. In 50 years, the owner wouldn't be left with a residue object they could send their kids to college on. They would enjoy it over ten years, as opposed to a lifetime.

D. H.: A lot of recent art has dealt with the idea of location; the entrance of the viewer or the percipient into the space of the object or the object entering into his space has begun to be questioned. The object's time enters the time of the percipient rather than being in some kind of past time. In the works of Robbe-Grillet, where the normal linear experience of moving along in time is constantly being reoriented or jammed back on you, it's your time

that's being put into question. I think the same kind of thing has occurred in some other forms.

M. C.: I certainly think it's true that non-material things most explicitly exploit present time phenomena. Time is a meaningful factor in plastic experience which can be updated. It's suggestive of ways in which simplistic experiences with physical entity can break down our conventional ways of relating to things. There are all kinds of trips that people have with objects, relating to them as tools, or relating to them as useful parts of larger tool complexes. The whole thing is broken down by a one-to-one confrontation with objects. Going back to Reinhardt, I know he was a great fan of George Kubler's. Kubler's book, *The Shape of Time*, talks about how no art of any kind exists outside of the context of its own time, that ultimately art isn't timeless at all, but emanates from very specific contexts, sequences in long histories of objects, things of that kind. Reinhardt's titles, then, are highly ironic, and this notion of art as something timeless is almost utterly exhausted. The way art gets out of time now is through manipulating the experience of time, in some way to suggest the experience of timelessness, or phenomena outside everyday experiences.

C. A.: I'm definitely the odd man out here, again because of my own work and temperament. Categories are useless to impose but categories do spring from the nature of our experience and our phenomena. I think of myself as a sculptor and I don't think of sculpture primarily as a time art. The materiality, the presence of the work of sculpture in the world, essentially independent of any single individual, but rather a residue of the experience of many individuals, and in the dream, the experience of the dead, the trees and the stones—I'm interested in that kind of essential thing. Nothing is timeless, I agree, but it's an idea that haunts us in the head, like immortality or God. Eternity doesn't run in a line, running from your nose and through your navel and your anus that way; eternity is a line running from your left hand through your right hand, so in one way all we know is *now*, and it is that "now", material presence in the world, which interests me.

S. S.: I am curious as to whether it would be possible to schematize time into objective time and subjective time.

I. W.: As far as I'm concerned, time is just a vast illusion, it's just a never-ending illusion without any possible understanding of it. I don't really use it in this sense, though. I use it just as a word that has suitable characteristics, but one of the facts is that it is a word, and that it is so nebulous, such an enigma, that you can't pin anything on it; it's so vague it's not even there. The word, when said, is like a sound; it vanishes in its moment of execution, the sound vanishes, just like time. But this is really what I'm trying to do. The same principles carry over to oral communication, and I'm not involved with time now, I'm involved with oral communication.

M. C.: The whole phenomenon of time is subjective, inasmuch as all we know about the passage of time is a succession of events in consciousness, and we have various attitudes towards that succession which are subjective. And our society has similarly subjective concepts that are shared. Beyond that, physics gives a time which is completely relative and changing. Pulsa tries to enrich time in all these categories on an experiential level.

Carl, with regard to what you said about now-ness. I wonder how your poems or transcriptions of words, trios, or what not, relate to that notion.

C. A.: They don't. I have composed some things which I call operas which have scores that have been displayed, but it's only like showing a score or a manuscript; they must be performed. I recognize that as being an extension of poetry, which I recognize to be a separate and distinct field—not again because I impose that category, but the nature of the work creates the category which is useful for description. So I do poetry and I also do sculpture; the same person does them so they're related by the same temperament. But I wonder, isn't Ian Wilson carrying on the tradition of the Bardic troubadours, singing the lays, you know, and up the republic (by the way, happy St. Patrick's Day). I wonder if Ian feels any sympathy with the tradition of poetry or oratory or rhetoric, or whatever, in his line about oral communication.

I. W.: I can go right back to the primitive philosophies of Greece. Pythagoras and Socrates (not so much Plato) were aware, obviously, of the animation of ideas presented through oral communication. They never went near the printed word, and so oral communication comes out of that tradition. But it also comes out of today, and today's art. I came up through the art of Primary Structure, etc., and I'm very much a part of it. I try all the time to keep things at a primary state and present subjects as directly as possible. If you have the subject of, say, oral communication, it can't be written because you can't write an orally communicated thing. Obviously you apply the medium that presents the idea as directly as possible, and you end up with yourself saying it—oral



communication—just directly. The animation of the situation is not destroyed.

*Joseph Kosuth from the floor:* Ian, I'd like to find out whether it's necessary in your idea of your art to say it yourself, or could someone else say it, read it out loud?

*I. W.:* For me to say it is only to introduce an idea, but I introduce it in such a form, in such a primary state, that you can remember it easily. You've all remembered it and you will walk out of here and do with it what you will.

*Kosuth:* Yes, but that's not an answer to the question. In terms of your idea of what your art is, is it necessary for you to be the one to give out the oral communication, or could someone read it a thousand miles from here and still have it be art? It would still be a similar experience. Is your own participation mandatory?

*I. W.:* My participation is not mandatory. Anyone's participation can be valid. If you wrote the word "oral communication" and you read it out, you would just be approaching the subject indirectly, that's all. You might as well not write it down, because there's no need to write it down. You can remember it.

*Kosuth:* You could send a telegram to Moscow and that could be read, you know, in a public square, and ten thousand people could hear it. And that could be an experience while you're still in New York. Would you accept those terms as being your art?

*I. W.:* If someone else does it, I don't care, but I'm not about to send a telegram to Moscow. I just have an idea, oral communication, and you can have it, you don't have to accept it.

*C. A.:* There's one thing that troubles me personally. I said that I did sculpture and I did poetry, and I'm willing to accept Ian's oral communication as an art form related to poetry, but not related to sculpture or painting, because I feel that if you can write or say something adequately, there's no need to make a painting or sculpture of it. In other words, painting and sculpture explicitly concern themselves with aspects of human sensibility which cannot adequately be dealt with in language. So that's why I wonder, is Ian here as a poet, in a sense?

*I. W.:* I certainly am not a poet. I'm a very bad writer; probably that's why I'm talking about oral communication. I'm not a poet and I'm considering oral communication as a sculpture. Because, as I said, if you take a cube, someone has said you imagine the other side because it's so simple. And you can take the idea further by saying you can imagine the whole thing without its physical presence. So now immediately you've transcended the idea of an object that was a cube into a word, without a physical presence. And you still have the essential features of the object at your disposal. So now, if you just advance a little, you end up where you can take up a word like time and you have the specific features of the word "time". You're just moving this idea of taking a primary structure and focusing attention on it.

*S. S.:* But what seems to be a critical difference in that transposition from the fact of a cube to the word "cube" is, of course, the difference between specific and general. And also taking *place* into consideration, a cube has to go somewhere, a cube is physically specific. There are as many different cubes as there are different sculptors to have them built. A Tony Smith cube is very different from a Donald Judd cube, or a Ronnie Bladen cube, or any one of fifty-five cubes. A cube is a size, shape, and, when it's exhibited or put in any situation it also becomes specific through location, where of course oral communication doesn't have any such quality. What's most interesting about the idea of oral communication (how this relates to time is something else again) is that it tends to a very much more general condition, whereas the making of art objects is in fact a very specific thing.

*I. W.:* Oral communication is a specific phrase presenting a universal human activity. You have a contradiction. You have a specific, or a particular condition, and a universal, or general condition.

*D. H.:* I'd like to suggest that there has to be a model to which the word refers. The world is out here, and we experience the world in a number of ways, and if there are cubes by Judd or Bladen or whoever else, or a general cube, nevertheless we all have models in our heads and the word "cube" springs us into some kind of mental activity.

*I. W.:* This is a prerequisite for the kind of thing I'm trying to do.

*C. A. (in reply to a question from the floor):* I was saying that there was a complex residue which can't be dealt with in other ways except sculpture. It can't be done with mental models, or by coming up with a conception and executing it. It's something about the quality of being in the world and presence in the world, I suppose. It's not a simple thing. Somebody said that painting was backward; I think painting continues to flourish and has flourished all that time when people were saying it was dead. Painting has a burden of work in itself which no other form or work can undertake. But Ian and Pula and Doug may be creating

new forms, different from painting and sculpture, and I look upon their work that way rather than as aspects of painting and sculpture.

*D. H.:* I am sitting here in the middle, between Ian and Carl, and I think my interests are somewhere in the middle too, that is, in the idea of a *depth*. There can't be a material presence to something that has a model and is brought into existence through language. I'm interested in a coexistence between some kind of model and language. It interests me very much to find out just where, between these two issues—what is purely verbal or language and what is purely material—there is an area in which I can operate.

*Robert Barry from the floor:* Carl, every time I've heard you talk about your work, you've spoken of it either the way it will be in the future, or the way you saw it in the past. Now, you were talking tonight about work which will rust or change; you also said you don't want people to maintain it the way it looked when it was first made. It seems to me that, as Seth said, this is a direct confrontation with time. Someone once said we know there is such a thing as time because we can see change. Now if you constantly allow change, if this is an aspect of your work, then you are directly dealing with time. And when you project yourself into the future, and think about the way it will be, you are projecting your consciousness into time—the same way a row of bricks projects out into space. In other words, I really don't think there is such a thing as a now.

*C. A.:* Well, I think all there is is a now because, after all, when I'm saying something about something in the past, I still say it in the present. If I remember a past event, I remember it now. The tense of memory is not the past, but the present, just as the tense of prophecy is not the future, but the present. I agree in a sense with Ian when he says time is an illusion for him. I think the now is the inescapable, and I think, as Lao-tzu wrote: "The uncarved block is wiser than the tablet incised by the Duke." I've always tried to reach that state of the uncarved block, which is the "now" (if not the *tao*) of the block.

*Lucy Lippard from the floor:* What someone in the audience said earlier tonight about energy seems to have a lot to do with what you're all talking about. Maybe it would be one way of locating some of the differences between you. Primary Structures in general were static; at least the generalization about Primary Structures was that these things were strictly confrontational, that they were whole and single and you saw them that way. You knew what the other side of the cube looked like, and so on. This was also called a way of getting around the flux of the modern world, of stopping time. It seems to me a lot of these things do come out of Primary Structures in a funny way, but it's a formal way rather than a temporal one; the temporal part is an extension.

Ecology seems to have a lot to do with this. There are supposed to be two schools of ecology: one is the "static" and European; the other is the "dynamic" and American. Supposedly Europe has already come to rest; it's been artificially regulated to the point where it won't change naturally that much more, whereas in America we have vast areas that still exist in a pretty natural state and the changes, the ecological changes, can continue. Anyway, it seems to me that all the things you're dealing with are energy and degrees of suppressing energy. Ian is using energy almost pure and simple. Pula is using it through media, in a more physical way. Carl, with your particle pieces and the scatter things, or Doug, in your location and duration pieces, was energy or the suppression of energy a major part of what you were thinking about?

*C. A.:* Well, my general rule is to find a particle (this is one of the most difficult things, to find or make a particle), and from that selection or discovery of a single particle, create a set of them in which the rules for joining the particles together is the characteristic of the single particle. I don't join things together; I'm not a structuralist at all. Kenneth Snelson pointed out that very few of the Primary Structures were actually structures, because the parts were in passive relationships to each other. I purposely do not glue, and I do not join, and I do not drill or weld. I used magnets, but that for me is an artificial way of increasing the mass of the object.

You mentioned my scatter pieces. They were a solution to the problem of taking a very small particle and combining it by a rule which was a characteristic of the first particle, a rule for the whole set of particles, but if the particle itself is too small to maintain coherency in a large array, then the scatter of the particles is their coherency. Particles get down to such a mass, they just don't maintain themselves in a simple array dictated by a rule which is a property of your first particle. It is done by an action. For me the action of, say, dropping a bag of little cubes and having them scattered on the floor, is just quicker in time than taking large metal plates and putting them down, of necessity, much more

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color and optical potentials have expanded. By adding fillers and dyes the nearly pure transparent material can be given any degree of coloration or opacity. Pale blue, purplish, pinks, yellow to chartreuse, bright red-orange, claret, and smoky grey, brown, and black have all resulted in the experiments. All emphasize the organic nature of the material and suggest even the poetic overtones of rare liquids or even fragrances. The suspension of microscopic metallic particles is a possibility, and fluorescent and pearlescent qualities have already been included. In line with Albers' thinking, whenever a new color is used Valentine feels it is unique as an artwork, even though traditional prejudice would classify the piece as only one out of an edition.

The eye is held by the shape, invigorated by the color, and caught up in reflections of light on the highly polished surfaces, intrigued by variations of color caused by changes in thickness and the angle of the light striking the object, aroused by the distortions of the shape itself optically and the distortions of the surrounding seen through the shape. Several light phenomena are quite ravishing—as when a beam of light enters at the top plane, angles, and causes a clear division of color change inside the piece, like a headlight cutting through fog, the particles catching the light glow intensely. From the sides, looking into a thin edge towards the light causes a milky haze to appear, seemingly captured and floating an inch or so inside the shape. At certain angles prismatic effects produce spots and bands of a spectral rainbow of colors. The effects noted before in the fiberglass pieces are compounded and complicated, but still the pieces engage the viewer immediately by appearing more

attractive, dense and even slippery, yet giving more to work with in terms of dissolving boundaries. Particularly confusing are reflections, refractions, and distortions which take place inside the works. One basic distortion caused by the shift in the angle of refraction makes the back bottom edge appear much nearer to the front plane than it actually is. The vertical slabs thus on careful inspection appear, not as thick monoliths but as vertical curving, concave panels. The thickening at the bottom which is necessary for the shape to stand unsupported is cancelled out and looks no thicker than the slender top plane. A curious bowing is the resulting visual experience; thinness at the top, a thickening through the middle where one's attention is drawn to a liquid distortion of the environment seen through the piece, and the illusion of thinning again at the bottom. It has been emphasized that such curved formations are Valentine's major predilection and it is carried out in these new pieces by means of optics available through use of this medium.

The newest walls stand not only because they are thicker at the base but they also curve around the viewer. The artist envisions a group of four, large enough in circumference so that the spectator would be placed at the center of a screening ring of optically disorienting walls. Hence his hope that at some soon future date a clear coating might be developed to be applied to the polished surfaces to protect them out of doors. Environmental prisms and lenses, seen in natural light, providing a unique spatial experience seems to be where Valentine is heading. His distorting liquid planes are very nearly now confounding.

#### LIPPARD:

slowly. But the unity is the unity, with the rule breaking down only because the particle itself is too small, which is a material thing.

(*In reply to a question from the floor:*) Yes, the scatter pieces can move because how they are is not more interesting one time than another time, because within the general range of the rule of one particle, or one particular sub-group of particles, their properties are in a general relationship, not in a frozen and fixed relationship as small magnets might be in a frozen and fixed relationship because they have a property beyond simple mass, shape, and so forth.

D. H.: I haven't thought of energy in any specific way, except as a suspension of movement after an activity that I begin is terminated—whatever the activity is, whatever the duration of the piece is. In other words, I've done works which I call duration pieces, which refer to time. Whatever process begins is plugged in and unplugged with time going on, plugged in very often to systems, as I've done with the postal system, where whatever happens occurs over time and space and actual movement by a number of means. I use a sufficient time to complete the work and then I pull out again. And there are other systems, random systems, that I've plugged into, maybe like scattering things too. I have used time systematically by setting up a structure to take a photograph of the nearest surface in one minute, then doubling it until I got up to 12,000 minutes or something like that—a very logical kind of dumb-bell sequence; and I've done things which are completely open, to be done or not done using the time in which I'm defining the idea of structure. In all instances, the idea of what happens within the period of time, just as what happens within the space that I define, is really the same as what's happening outside; in other words, in terms of things going on in the world, if that is energy.

If I define a large space that contains many square miles, by marking it in some manner, the markers do not create a wall or a shell with an inside and an outside, they are just an idea about that degree of space, that kind of form; all activities are equal in that sense. In other words, there's no priority, there's no privilege over energy. I'm not trying to capture any of them. I'm just kind of commenting on one set of them.

(*In reply to a comment from the floor:*) Right, right, extension and compression. When I've finished the thing, I feel that the documents that I have sent into the world come back and I can call up present time. I'll tell you about a recent one—a nesting box, which has gone out and back and out and back by mail for six weeks. When I'm finished, in ten weeks and ten thousand miles, I'll have all the boxes contained within each previous box. And I call that "present time". I've got all that space and all those postal documents contained in one package. All that energy and so forth is right there.

Lippard: So you're kind of breaking down the distinction between the properties of the various media and establishing the contact

between eye and brain more clearly. You're bypassing all that business about whether it's painting or sculpture, visual or verbal, plastic or literary.

D. H.: Right. When I use language, I want whatever model that's out there, or the data, if it's a package; whatever it is, I want that to come right into one's head with the language. I see that as a direct "now" confrontation. In other words, right from the eye into the head, and that's why, as I said before, I'm somewhere in between making things that can be seen and things that can only be described.

S. S.: Legal documents usually contain the phrase: "Time is the essence of this contract."

M. C.: I'd like to go back to Lucy's question about energy. Pula's efforts have been generally to create environmental situations in which energy exists as a phenomenon directly perceivable, one which is like a plastic experience. Beyond that, though, we're interested in monitoring energy from outside our environments. We're interested in systems which pick up information from the ecology, which respond to the audience's physiological experiences. Through techniques of this kind we're increasing the quantity of energy available to an audience within an environment and the notion that this experience can become many times more meaningful through the presence of feedback of one kind or another, where one part of the system picks up information from another part. I wonder whether other members of the panel would like to comment on feedback, the notion of a system or entity where some part of the system informs some other part of a particular operation.

I. W.: When I mention oral communication to someone, they go to another person, they mention it to that other person. That person mentions the same object to another person. There's not so much a feedback but a feeding throughout a group of people. The idea maintains itself without any kind of apparent physical form.

D. H.: I've described my definition of time as something completely open, and open to whatever convention is applied to it, but which frames us. I use time to create conventions, which look this way or that way or that way, rather than trying to systematize it and say that time is any one thing. It interests me to use time in a number of ways through the convention of the structure or idea that I put into a process.

S. S.: Not only have we not achieved clarity here, we may not even have achieved chaos. But it's often been noted that interesting or engaging times seem much shorter than times which are not interesting. Inasmuch as you've been sitting in this room and listening to this for almost two hours, you probably have certain feelings as to your own relationship to it all. Maybe that's the only subjective value for time—good times or bad times, like the two types of art, good or bad. It's twenty-three minutes of eleven.

From the floor: How has what you've said been influenced by the fact that your watch is three minutes fast?